

Utah's Health Care

A Major System Ripe for Reform

The health care industry contributes 85,630 jobs and nearly \$3 billion in wages directly to the Utah economy each year. Large employers like University of Utah Health Care, Intermountain Healthcare, HCA and others, provide acute and specialty care to the entire intermountain region, making Salt Lake City a regional center for health care services.

Utah's health care professionals provide care with distinction, offering among the lowest costs and best outcomes of any state in the country. Without doubt, the Utah economy is larger and stronger, and the quality of life in Utah is better, because of the contributions of the health care industry.

Even with such a stellar health care system, Utah's business community believes the system is ripe for reform. While many have difficulty accessing health care, the system inadvertently encourages over-consumption of health services (e.g. hiding the full cost from patients or doctors over prescribing to avoid lawsuits). As a result, health care expenditures consume 16 percent of our nation's gross domestic product and that share is growing.

Increasingly, large and small businesses, as well as individuals, cannot afford health insurance, leaving 13-16 percent of Utahns (300,000 to 400,000) without health care coverage. Moreover, businesses that provide insurance pay an estimated 17 percent more to cover the costs of services provided to the uninsured.

Business leaders believe that we have hit the tipping point for reform. It is time to act. If we don't tailor a homegrown solution, a top-down approach will be imposed that will impair our global competitiveness and stifle economic growth.

The Salt Lake Chamber has teamed with the United Way of Salt Lake to develop a comprehensive proposal for health care reform in Utah that will make high-quality health care available and affordable to all Utahns. Key elements of the proposal may include features such as:

- **Portability**—The ability for people's health care coverage to move with them as their circumstances change.
- **Transparency**—Consumers deserve to know the quality and cost of their health care. A transparent system will allow consumers to choose health care options based on value.
- **Insurance exchange**—An exchange is a state-sponsored mechanism that will facilitate the purchase of health

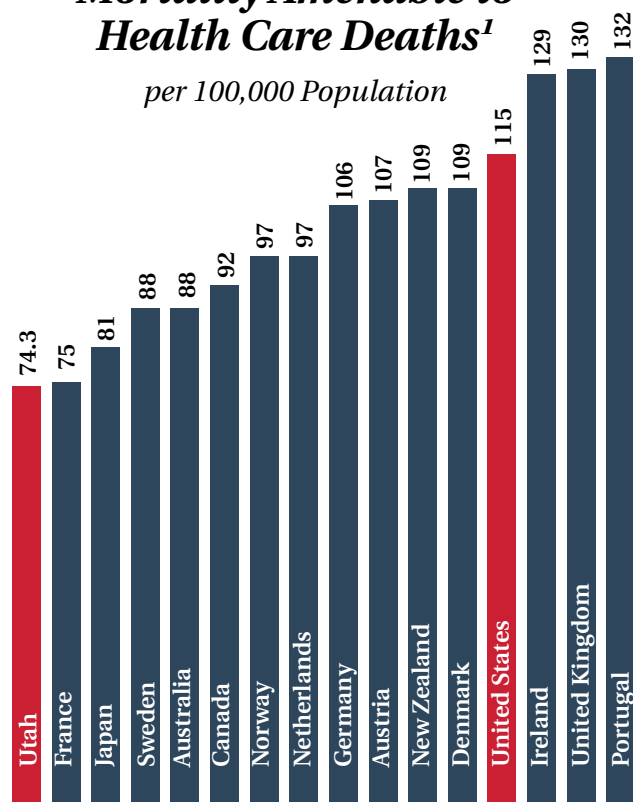
insurance by individuals, families and workers who do not currently have insurance. The exchange provides a legal structure to purchase health insurance using pre-tax dollars and will enable portability.

- **Health information technology**—Utah is in an enviable position to lead the nation in the implementation of health information technology, including endorsing and implementing national standards, security and electronic health records. ⓘ

These are just a few of the many reform components that will be examined. If you would like to learn more, visit www.saltlakechamber.org.

Mortality Amenable to Health Care Deaths¹

per 100,000 Population



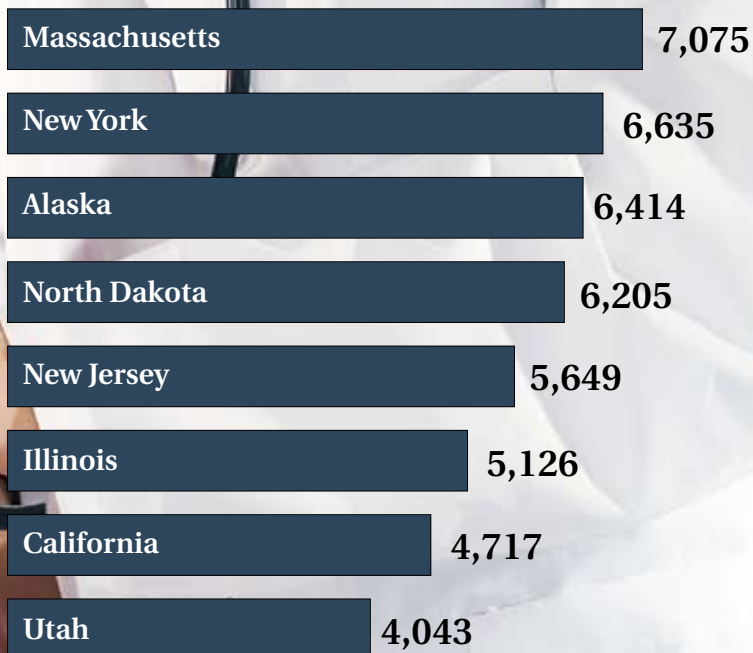
Source: World Health Organization, Nolte and McKee, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy Standardized for age (1998) Utah from 2003, normalized for general US change from 1998

¹ A common measure for the quality of a health care system is known as mortality amenable to health care. The measure shows deaths from certain causes that should not occur in the presence of timely and effective health care. Utah scores very well in this regard, giving policy makers more flexibility in how they reform the health care system compared with the national average and other countries.

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2006 Health Cost per Capita

*Selected States
Utah is Lowest Nationwide*



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006